

Top 6 Ways to Reduce Stress



By Wanda Marie Thibodeaux

Stress affects millions of people around the world, causing everything from excess sweating to heart palpitations. Over time, exposure to stress can tax the body so much that it can even be fatal--in fact, it's known as the silent killer. If you need ways to relax, these strategies can help.

Call a buddy.

Much of the time, when people are stressed, it's simply because they are bottling up what's irritating them. When you get on the phone and connect with someone, you get a chance to vent and get a lot of what's bothering you off your chest. Having good conversation also can make you feel less alone in your stressful situations. Don't forget--if your friends aren't available, professional therapists and clergy can help, too. Even getting online into a moderated chat room can be beneficial for some individuals.

Interestingly, some experts advocate that, if you can't call someone, you simply talk things out for yourself. These professionals believe that the process of verbalizing how you're feeling or what you need to do helps you to focus and purge whatever negativity might be bogging you down. You might feel a little silly talking to yourself at first, but just remember--you're doing it to calm yourself and fix a problem, not just to entertain yourself.

Write in a journal.

Journals can be helpful with stress management in two ways. First, like calling a friend, writing about what you feel or what's going on in your life lets you express your frustrations or worries. The simple act of slowing down to put pen to paper (or, these days, fingers to keyboard) gives you a chance to think and reflect, to clear your mind and reset your priorities if needed. Secondly, journaling offers

the opportunity to note things that are positive or that you're grateful for. This can help you keep perspective when you feel as though you have it super rough.

Change your body approach.

For years, doctors have recognized that emotional and physical well-being are intricately connected. Studies have shown, for example, that eating a more well-balanced diet can lower blood pressure and combat the production of cortisol, a hormone the body produces in response to stress. The same is true for getting more sleep, getting massages, exercising regularly (yes, even a minute of yoga counts, beginners out there), and engaging in other self-care activities. Even being intimate more often helps because of the way it triggers the release of feel-good chemicals such as oxytocin.

Try meditating.

Most forms of meditation involve some form of deep breathing. The steady, rhythmic pattern of full inhalation and exhalation delivers more oxygen to the entire body and helps muscles to relax. Additionally, meditation helps you to refocus your attention on something else, drawing your thoughts away from what's troubling you. The more you meditate, the more solidified these pathways to calm become in the brain, meaning that it becomes easier for you to reach a state of inner peace over time. There are many forms of meditation, so you simply need to explore and find the approach that works for you.

Listen to your favorite music.

Music has been connected to both physical and mental wellness for thousands of years. In fact, the ancient Greeks believed that certain sounds and pitch intervals were simply too powerful, capable of bringing a person to craziness or hysteria. Whether it's showtunes or grunge, let yourself get lost in some tracks.

Yuk it up.

Whenever you laugh, your body releases endorphins that can battle not only cortisol, but also adrenaline, a hormone closely related to the fight-or-flight response. Watching a comic movie, checking out a comedy club, letting the kids tickle torture you or just plain being goofy are all legitimate ways to get the laughs going and the stress down.

Conclusion

Stress is extremely common. That said, you don't have to merely put up with it. You can apply these simple methods every day to feel better. If none of these methods let you rest easier, it might be time for more significant lifestyle changes, such as a career change.

Teach your child powerful anxiety relief techniques at www.gozen.com